

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Kentucky libraries to receive support to help provide broadband access for more Americans

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Contact Information: Paige Sexton, 502-564-8300 ext. 315
Paige.sexton@ky.gov

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will support state-level efforts to apply for federal broadband stimulus funds

FRANKFORT, Ky. – The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has announced a partnership with the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) and 13 other states to help public libraries compete for federal broadband stimulus funds made available through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act. The funds will flow through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) new Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

Through this partnership, the foundation will provide KDLA with technical and consulting assistance to develop competitive funding proposals for BTOP. The foundation will also provide federal required matching funds, contingent on a successful BTOP award. In addition, KDLA will receive funds to help public libraries secure additional federal E-rate funding to sustain future broadband connection costs.

"We are very pleased to have been chosen by the Gates Foundation for this partnership," said Wayne Onkst, State Librarian and Commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. "Resources and support from the foundation will be very important as we apply for federal broadband stimulus funds to provide our residents with expanded broadband access at their public libraries."

Nationally, and in Kentucky, libraries report that customer demand for high-speed Internet access is growing faster than their ability to provide increased bandwidth. A recent American Library Association study reports that 60 percent of all libraries say their current Internet speed is insufficient. For many Kentuckians, the public library is the only place they can conduct a job search, access government services, and learn new workforce skills.

“Federal, state, and local government investments in connecting libraries to broadband are important steps toward realizing the vision of universal broadband access,” said Jill Nishi, deputy director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. Libraries program. “When libraries have access to broadband, they can effectively deliver critical educational, employment, and government services for residents that lack Internet access elsewhere. As community anchor institutions, libraries can also help drive local broadband adoption.”

The foundation has invested \$350 million in grants and support to install and sustain computers in libraries and train thousands of library staff in all 50 states and U.S. territories. The foundation continues to support libraries through investments in programs, research, advocacy training, and public awareness efforts that will help libraries sustain high-quality online access for patrons in partnership with their communities. For more information, visit: www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries. For downloadable high-resolution photos, please visit: www.gatesfoundation.org/press-room/Pages/news-market.aspx.

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About the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives

The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives works with libraries to provide equitable access to quality library and information resources and services, as well as helps public agencies ensure that legislatively mandated documentation of government programs is created, efficiently maintained and made readily accessible.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people – especially those with the fewest resources – have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffet. Learn more at www.gatesfoundation.org or join the conversation at Facebook and Twitter.